

Newsletter Wet Notes

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The Ministry of Environment's Pakistan Wetlands Programme

The monthly newsletter of the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP) is published to inform donors, scientists, academics, researchers, environmentalists and environmentally concerned individuals of all qualifications and ages about the Programme, its projects and upcoming events while giving insights and updates on research, education, and habitat management activities. The PWP's objective is to conserve the globally important wetlands biodiversity in Pakistan while alleviating poverty. It is a progressive initiative of the Federal Ministry of Environment and is being implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan (WWF P). It is funded by a consortium of national and international donors including, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE), WWF - Network and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

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Production Staff:

Pakistan Wet Notes is compiled and Edited by Marriyum Aurangzeb, Coordinator, National Awareness Raising and Communication, PWP and Doug Kuzmiak, Editorial Consultant. Layout and Design by Fakhr-e-Alam.

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“Nothing Slips By”

The Deosai Team and members of visiting mission at Sheosar Lake

Photo by: Ghulam Rasool, PWP

Glimpses of Heaven on Earth-visit to Northern Pakistan

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme played host to notables from Pakistan and abroad when professionals from the UNDP, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and Ministry of Environment visited the research camp at *Bara Pani* on the Deosai Plateau in the Northern Areas from June 9th - 11th, 2007. The Deosai Plateau is one of the highest plateaus in the world and, at an altitude of more than 4,000 m, is home to the brown bear, three species of

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Programme updates

» This month's Regional Programme Update *highlight* is the visit to the Deosai National Park by international and national professionals from the UNDP, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, and Ministry of Environment. The occasion was the launching of new initiatives on the Deosai Plateau and throughout the region covered by the PWP's Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex.

» Another item of interest is that offices at the four demonstration sites of the PWP have been established and are now operational.

The site office of the Central Indus Wetlands Complex is based in Rahim Yar

Khan while the office of Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex is located in Gawadar. The site office of the Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex has been set up in *Saidu Sharif*, Swat, with a sub-office in the Northern Areas capital city of Gilgit.

Hiring of staff for the site offices is also completed. Ahmad Said joined the PWP as the Site Manager, Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex; Abdul Rahim is the Site Manager for Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex; and Sajid Qudoos Awan is the Site Manager for the Central Indus Wetlands Complex.

» The PWP recently purchased Platform Terminal Transmitters (PTTs) and turtle



tags for use in the Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex, among others. In order to ensure reliability and long-term effectiveness of the equipment, great care was taken in selecting and locating appropriate international suppliers. After a thorough evaluation, *Telonics* and *National Band and Tags* were chosen.

Currently, the equipment is awaiting customs clearance and as soon as this is completed, the PWP will send an expedition into the field to fit the transmitters and tags to marine turtles. This will initiate new opportunities and areas of study for the conservation of marine turtles in Pakistan.

» Initial steps and appropriate measures have been taken to obtain bird rings to further facilitate the bird ringing initiative. Bird migration is a major area of concern for the PWP throughout its network of wetlands complexes.

» The Pakistan Wetlands Programme is pleased to announce the launching online of the Pakistan Wetlands Network. This web-based portal to interactive chat, forum, discussion rooms and other innovative features will improve learning about the wetlands and understanding of their dynamics.

It has been planned to be a convergence of information and resources into one single portal which may also be used as a tool for communication and awareness-raising for Wetlands in Pakistan and more specifically, on the Pakistan Wetlands Programme.

This initiative followed an intensive period of research and development by the PWP, working in conjunction with a well-respected Pakistani information technology company.

Despite the generally arid nature of Pakistan's climate, the region supports an estimated 780,000 ha of wetlands that cover about 10% of the total surface area of the country. In excess of 225 significant wetlands sites are on record and 19 of these have been internationally recognised by the Ramsar Convention as being of global



importance. The diverse assortment of natural freshwater and marine wetlands that occurs within Pakistan supports many unique combinations of biodiversity.

The new portal has been designed to address the key wetlands related issues in the PWP Demonstration Sites. These are the Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex, Salt Range Wetlands Complex, Central Indus Wetlands Complex and Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex, while providing general information about wetlands and their associated biodiversity.

Pak Wet Net has been designed to enable students and others interested in wetlands ecology to have access, not only to the information about wetlands, but also to facilitate knowledge exchange, experience sharing and learning among conservation planners, researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and the general public.

The contents of this network has been designed to function as a medium, platform and a tool for mutual collaborative learning such as:

- Communication via email
- Discussion boards

- Synchronous communication by providing chat facilities and allowing online group members to respond in real time
- Discussion forums
- Use of online presentations in real time or stored as downloadable files on a website
- Hyperlinks

» Pakistan Wetlands Programme, building bridges with all the nations from around the world and making "Yours" and "Ours" days even brighter!

The PWP is moving faster and gaining even more strength as it joins hands with many other organisations with similar goals. The aim is to make the standards more visible, viable, and protective for all the lives in, and around, the wetlands by ensuring the health and biological integrity of wetlands in the country.

The Training and Capacity-building Programme, one of the major components of the PWP, is laying the foundation at an individual level to make the streams go more easily and smoothly.

The long-term objective of this component is to build capacity in wetlands management at all levels

but it is initially targeting the key officials of the public and private sector in different regions of Pakistan.

The first step in achieving the goal is to train people and create awareness among individuals and groups in the relevant subjects. For this purpose, a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) tool was designed as a preliminary step. The TNA-exercise was conducted during the months of May - June, 2007 and will be an ongoing process for the next month. It will identify the extent of the needs of

different people in enabling them to understand the field more easily.

In this regard, introductory sessions with the Secretaries Wildlife, Fisheries, Forests and Parks and the Directors and Directors General of Environmental Agencies and other organisations in Punjab, NWFP and Balochistan took place to ensure that the training needs in all the departments are met.

Similar sessions with such educational institutes as Quaid-e-Azam University, Allama Iqbal Open University, the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences and

Government College University, Lahore, were also conducted in order to discuss different aspects of curriculum development for a year-long, post-graduate course in wetlands management. This is an integral part of the entire programme.

Other regions including Sindh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Northern Areas, will be visited in due course.

The response has already been encouraging from all sectors giving hope for a better tomorrow!

Public Events

Environment Day 2007-Melting Ice...A Hot Topic?

The Ministry of Environment hosted a mega event to celebrate World Environment Day (WED) 2007 at Holiday Inn Hotel, Islamabad on June 5th, 2007. The Federal Minister for Environment, Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat, Minister of State for Environment, Malik Amin Aslam Khan and Secretary Environment, Mian Muhammad Jamil, Ministry of Environment chaired the sessions. Their participation highlighted the commitment to future action by the Government of Pakistan for this year's theme *Melting Ice...A Hot Topic?*

PWP National Awareness-raising and Communication Coordinator, Marriyum Aurangzeb, anchored the event and briefed the participants about the background of the WED and the importance of this year's theme to Pakistan.

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on June 5th, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General

Assembly on the same day, led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme.

This year's World Environment Day theme entitled *Melting Ice - A Hot Topic?*, was selected in support of International Polar Year and focused on the effects that climate change is having on polar ecosystems, communities and the ensuing consequences around the world. It is a topic of particular importance to Pakistan.

Geographers often call the Northern Areas Territory of Pakistan, which has more glaciers than anywhere else on earth outside of the Arctic and Antarctic, the "Third Pole." As such, the environmental stability of this region has serious implications not only for Pakistan but for the world in terms of water economy and water management.

The degree of snow-melt and subsequent flow from the melted ice fields has potentially dramatic implications for the volume of water that flows into the Indus and its flood plain. It can seriously impact the dynamics of wetlands ecology hundreds of kilometers downstream of the glacial areas.

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme also celebrated the day through a series of television talk show programmes and radio panel

discussions that were broadcast across Pakistan and picked up via satellite transmission throughout the world.

The PWP's National Programme Director, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Wani and National Programme Manager Richard Garstang had "spots" on such nationally televised shows as ARY1's Today's Segment, Pakistan Television's Prime Time Panel Discussion, Indus TV's Insight, Khyber TV's Panel Discussion, Apna TV's Takra, and such radio programmes as FM100's Today's Special, FM 89's Hot News, Pakistan Radio's Panel Discussion.

Along with Dr. Wani and Richard Garstang, members of Pakistan's



Source: Ministry of Environment

Environmental community, representatives from international donor agencies and noted academics were invited to take part. Appearance on these programmes brings wetlands conservation issues to a policy level by reaffirming their national importance.

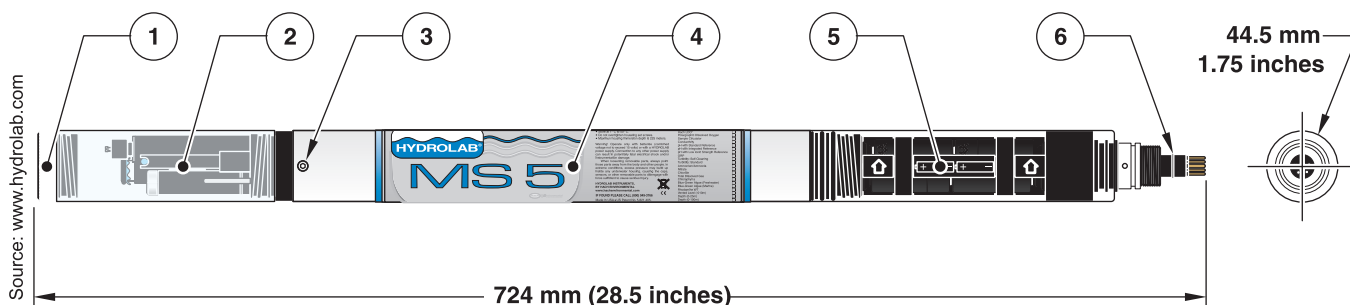
Technical Innovation ("Coolstuff")

Hydro Lab MS-5

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme has always endeavoured to make use of state-of-the-art equipment for data collection and analysis. The PWP, from the time of its inception, has managed to identify and locate the most recent equipment used worldwide, with the aim of enhancing research and to ensure the utmost accuracy and authenticity in its data collection techniques. In doing so it has exposed its technical staff and other relevant researchers to a wide array of knowledge and skills that would enable them to meet the international standards. This uplift of indigenous capacity was only possible through the introduction of new technology that ensured

available, the PWP has procured the Hydrolab MS-5 for more specific water quality measurements and easy handling. Besides being light-weight and compact, it has been customised for profiling as well as unattended monitoring. In other words, one can leave it unattended for long-hours and it manages to take readings on its own. Alternatively one can capture sample readings randomly when the instrument is set on manual mode. It can measure up to ten parameters; pH, Dissolved Oxygen, Oxidation Reduction Potential (ORP or Redox), Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), Specific Conductivity, Salinity, Temperature, Resistivity, Battery Status and Depth. In addition, it saves the hassle of taking separate meters and bottles to preserve samples for laboratory analysis. It saves time as it electronically takes the

How it Works: the sonde (as shown in the diagram) is connected to a data cable at the connector intercept (point 6 in the figure), the data cable is then connected to an output device, usually a laptop computer. When the sonde is deployed in water the calibration cup is removed and replaced by a protection cap to protect the sensors and also to allow the sonde to remain suspended in water. In order to run the equipment, Hydras 3 LT Software, is installed in the laptop and parameters are then selected from the software. The software when run on the computer connected to the sonde will take reading as per the required settings. Once the samples have been captured, the software then allows the researcher to save the data onto an Excel® programme for further manipulation. The PWP has successfully used this



1. Calibration Cap	4. Housing
2. Calibration Cup	5. Battery Compartment (optional)
3. Locking Screw	6. Connector

sophistication and perfection. Under the spotlight this month is a seemingly simple, rod-like, quantum water sampler called the Hydrolab. It is a multi-probe sonde used as a water quality monitoring instrument. It supports several probes that are built around a set of reliable sensors and electronic components. According to literature available on the equipment, the first multi-parameter sonde was introduced by Hydrolab in 1968 and set the standard for water quality multi-probes worldwide. *It can function even in freezing temperatures!* Among the several models

measurement from the sample and displays the result on an output device e.g. surveyor data logger or computer within seconds - *indeed a true heaven for water monitoring analysts! What else could one wish for?* For the techno-freaks who crave for such information, the specifications for MS-5 are given below;

Vital Statistics	
Size	21"/53.3 cm
Weight	2.2lbs/1.0 kg
Computer Interface	RS-232, SDI-12, RS-485
Memory	120,000 measurements
Battery Supply	8 AA
Operating Temp.	-5 to 50° C
Maximum Depth	225m

equipment both in the field and in demonstrations for research institutions. Aware of the equipment's full potential and realising its growing demand, the Programme regularly lends this instrument to academic institutions, in order to enable them to improve their research quality and become familiar with the latest technologies being used in the development arena. The PWP intends to educate young curious minds for enhancing their capacity in the future as well. *Until next month, I hope this article under the "cool stuff" quenches your thirst for technological discovery!*

By: **Shafaq Masud**, Research Assistant, PWP

One River's Flood is Another's Drought – River Basin Transfers Threaten World's Most Vital Resource

Gland, Switzerland - Increasingly popular schemes to pour water from one river into another less endowed are putting the very source of life at risk, says WWF in a new report entitled *Pipedreams? Inter-basin transfers and water shortages*.

The report from the global conservation organisation shows that inter-basin transfers are inevitably costly schemes that damage the natural environment, interrupting flows between rivers and compromising their ability to provide food and water.

The report explores schemes completed in Australia, South Africa and Spain and others proposed in Brazil, China, Greece and Peru. It is worth noting that hundreds more exist including some that are not publicly known because of their often controversial nature.

Almost all cases share common flaws: cost overruns, insufficient transparency, irreversible damage to rivers, lack of stakeholder consultation, displacement of communities, planned benefits falling short, and a lack of exploration of alternative sustainable options. According to Jamie Pittock, Director of WWF's Global Freshwater Programme, the solutions to the water crisis must be rooted in conserving wetlands while properly assessing and managing local demands for water. Basin transfers must be the last resort after all other sustainable approaches have been explored.

Impacts of Climate Change on Wetlands

Vanessa Andrae, PWP/UNDP intern, probes some possible outcomes of climate change on Pakistan's precious marine and freshwater wetlands.

The main impacts of climate change on wetlands are likely to be increasing temperatures, changes in precipitation and sea-level rise. These factors will have many consequences on the viability of wetlands and the local communities dependent on them for their livelihoods. It is difficult to predict exactly the future scenario for



Pakistan's wetlands but the occurrence of more frequent, extreme events such as droughts and floods are bound to increase. In addition to many social, ecological and economic benefits, wetlands function as carbon stores or *sinks* that reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Wetlands, like forests, can also contribute to the prevention of climate change not only for Pakistan but worldwide. Wetland forests, like mangroves, reduce damage from

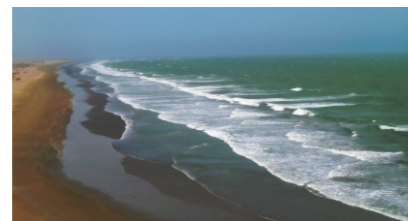
coastal storms and floods. Population growth, rapid urbanisation, conversion to agricultural land and river flow regulation are major causes of wetland losses. Without wetlands and other natural barriers, coasts would be increasingly vulnerable to sea-level rise.

Changes in coastal topography have resulted in relocating the position of the Keti Bundar Wildlife Sanctuary in the Indus Delta. The sea has intruded more than 60km inside the delta and now the ecology of the river has changed to a marine environment. Salt-water intrusion has resulted in changes of species composition and decreasing of freshwater supply. Turtles would be affected by sea-level rise because of the changes to beach habitat. Higher tides would inhibit beach formation by making it less sandy which damages nests. Migration of mangroves and tidal wetlands inland due to sea-level rise is obstructed by human infrastructure, other land use, and their ability to migrate in sufficient time to survive.

Increasing ocean temperatures will have an impact on corals with more frequent bleaching events and higher mortality as corals are sensitive to thermal stress. Fish, and other biodiversity inter-dependent on corals, would be adversely affected by their loss. Whale and dolphin migratory routes from Astola to Jiwani would be threatened by changing sea

temperatures, loss of habitat and decline in the food supply (krill) from climate change impacts.

Many migrant and breeding species will be disturbed by seasonal imbalances and changing habitats leading to shifts in species composition and ultimately extinction of species that are not able to adapt quickly enough. Rare and endangered plant and animal species with sensitivity to small temperature changes often have no alternative habitat, especially in isolated areas such as those in mountainous and alpine wetlands. Drought has dried up many lakes in Pakistan like the Uchali Wetlands Complex. Increased evaporation of lakes and rivers will lead to shallower water and the proliferation of invasive plant species leading to extinction of fish due to lack of dissolved oxygen. Lower lake levels could also lead to the exposure of



Makran Coast

bird nesting sites to predators.

It is vital to manage and conserve Pakistan's wetlands as human pressure due to pollution, overuse, degradation, erosion, etc. will exacerbate the impacts of climate change. Adaptation strategies consist of increasing connectivity between ecosystems allowing for migration of species to occur in response to climate change. Also, plantings and restoration of degraded areas will help to re-establish ecosystem resilience to climate change.

More research needs to be done to study the effects of climate change on wetlands in addition to the development of models with the aim of implementing adaptation measures.

In the coming years the Pakistan Wetlands Programme will endeavour to take the lead and promote effective action in order to combat the impacts of climate change on the country's wetlands.

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endemic fish and wetlands of several types where many forms of aquatic vegetation, delicate wildflowers and medicinal plants are found.

UNDP Pakistan's Country Director Alvaro Rodriguez, and Deputy Country Director Mikiko Tanaka,

Manager, National Programme Masood Arshad and Programme Manager, Regional Programmes, Ahmad Khan, from PWP accompanied these professionals. Wetlands Consultant Dr. Humaira Khan who is working in the PWP Gilgit Sub-office on the Deosai Wetlands and Editorial Consultant Doug Kuzmiak accompanied the



Photo by: Ghulam Rasool, PWP

Programme Officer Abdul Qadir Rafiq and Regional Advisors Dr. Sultana Bashir and Gernot Brodning of UNDP from Bangkok were

"The development work in Deosai Plateau area is impressive. The area constitutes a fragile yet vital ecosystem for Pakistan and the global community and every effort to support its sustainability over time is necessary. This project is helping to fill the gap between scientific knowledge to develop capacity for promoting sustainable development related to fragile areas"

Alvaro Rodriguez, Country Director, UNDP Pakistan

among the guests. Also in attendance were Royal Netherlands Embassy First Secretary Fred Smiet and Programme Officer Yasmin Jawed, along with Inspector General of Forests and the National Programme Director of PWP, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Wani and the National Project Director of MACP Faiz Ali from the Ministry of Environment. The PWP's National Programme Manager, Richard Garstang, along with Programme

visitors.

The Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex (NAWC) is one of four that have targeted interventions to protect the richness of resources in the northern mountain ranges of Pakistan. The NAWC stretches over 15,000 sq. km and may have two or three "hot spots" with focused management interventions.

The specific objectives of the professionals' visit were to jointly monitor the on-going initiatives of PWP in the region, establish the PWP's relevance to the on-ground situation in areas typified by NAWC, conduct meetings with the government counterparts, and to obtain an idea of the regions unique ecological diversity.

By using the same basic resources that are provided to PWP field assessment teams during their service, the visitors were able to experience some of the rigours and pleasures of camp life.

Meal-time discussions about the natural resources of Deosai National Park and the possibility of declaring the area as a globally significant site under the Ramsar Convention took place along with

lively exchanges about the global state of wetlands and the importance of Pakistan's Deosai Plateau from a world perspective.

A brief demonstration was made of the significance of high alpine wetlands complexes in the context of sustaining the surrounding habitat and wider issues of water security for rest of the country. The importance of conducting targeted activities on awareness-raising of the local population as well as tourists was highlighted. Further, the visit was also conducted to get the general feel of the area and develop an understanding of the key issues related to wetlands.

It was also emphasised that such

"Visiting the wetlands in the Deosai area helped us to appreciate the valuable but fragile eco-system and the challenges of implementing effective interventions to preserve the environment while enabling local communities to cater for their development needs. The project is drawing from international and local experience to work with communities in this direction. Targeted advocacy is equally important to engage national and local government and other stakeholders that have a stake in the development and exploitation of these areas to adopt sustainable measures"

Mikiko Tanaka, Deputy Country Director, UNDP-Pakistan

visits of programme donors and implementing partners to other regions where the PWP is actively working should be made more often. This would enable the monitoring of progress on a regular basis and provide recommendations on how to improve upon the programme. The Pakistan Wetlands Programme acknowledges the support of Vaqar Zakria and Dr. Anees Ur Rahman of the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation, Muhammad Ismail, Divisional Forest Officer Skardu and Ghulam Tahir, Conservator Forests NAs, in making arrangements for the visit.

By: **Masood Arshad**, Programme Manager, National Programmes, PWP

Other News

Gonu Cyclone in Gwadar Coast

A strong tropical storm, designated "Gonu," hit the Makran Coast on June 4th inflicting damage to the property of local communities.

The ocean swept over coastal sandy beaches damaging houses in Surbandar and destroying boats along the coastline. The storm with dusty winds, thick dark clouds and high waves continued until June 7th leaving at least 100 small *hella* boats partially or completely destroyed. *Hella* boats, which are used by crews of four to five fishermen, are an important source of subsistence.



The destruction of these boats represents the loss of livelihood for more than 500 families in the area. Some sources estimated that around 1,000 families have been affected by the cyclone in Gwadar alone. The storm demolished eighteen houses and a primary school in Surbandar, a fishing village about 30 km north-east of Gwadar. The cyclone destroyed the homes of more than 24 families representing about 140 men, women and children.

According to reports from local

NGOs, there is an immediate need for rehabilitation and extension of support to the affected families. Interviews with the people show that some of the fishermen may not be able to return to work in the near future as building boats requires a large investment of money and time. In response to the demands of the local fishermen, voiced in a demonstration on the Coastal Highway, the local NGOs recommended helping them with short-term rehabilitation and construction of safety walls on the shore around the village. Keeping in view the cyclone frequencies of occurrence, which are 10 to 15 years, adopting a long-term strategy on safety of fishermen and their assets from cyclone damage would be required. This may comprise of building piers and enhancing harbours, provision and strengthening of vital communication links, and early cyclone warning systems.

By: **Ahmad Khan**, Programme Manager Regional Programmes and **Abdul Rahim**, Site Manager, Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex, PWP.

Orientation and Team-building Exercise Organised for the Indus for All Programme Team

The Indus For All Programme organised an orientation visit and team-building exercise for its staff from April 20th to 28th, 2007. As part of orientation, the team members visited WWF - Pakistan's Head Office in Lahore and Programme



Office in Islamabad. The team also met with the staff of the Pakistan Wetlands Programme. The three-day team-building exercise took place in Abbottabad. Adventure Foundation Pakistan facilitated the event. The team also visited Ayubia National Park in Nathiagali. The Chief Conservator NWFP Wildlife Department, and DFO, Ayubia National Park, briefed the team about the conservation initiatives taken by NWFP Wildlife Department in general and Ayubia National Park in particular.

Indus For All Programme Celebrates Environment Day-2007

The Indus for All Programme organised awareness-raising activities at field sites on June 5th, 2007 to mark World Environment Day. An interactive theatre, a cultural programme and a seminar were organised by the Chotiari Site Office, Sanghar. The Pai Site Office also organised a seminar on "Melting Ice: A hot topic". The event was attended by the representatives of local government, academia, and the community.

By: **Zafar Khan**, Manager, Environmental Education and Communications, Indus For All Programme, WWF Pakistan

World-wide Wetlands

Pakistan Wetlands Programme Research Fellow Trains Colleagues in China

Gill Braulik, Indus Dolphin Research Fellow with the Pakistan Wetlands Programme and IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group member participated as a trainer in the South China Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Capacity Building Meeting, from May 27th to June 1st, 2007, at Xiamen, China.

The training programme was organised as part of the US-China Cooperation in Coastal Management and Gill was

invited to provide expertise on creating and managing MPAs for marine mammals. The training workshop was designed to strengthen conservation and sustainable use management capacities at four existing Marine Protected Areas in South China which include a coral MPA at Sanya, a mangrove MPA in Nanji and a migratory corridor for marine mammals at Dongshan/Nanao.

More than 50 MPA mid-level managers participated in the course and new participatory management plans for each MPA were drafted.

Announcement:



Explore Wilderness

in Northern Pakistan



Sheosar Lake, Deosai Plains



Photos by: Ghulam Rasool, PWP



Visit Lakes on the Roof of the World

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme is planning a scientific expedition to high altitude lakes in the northern mountain areas of Pakistan during July – August, 2007 and would like to invite selected members of the public to join the team as paying participants. This is an ideal opportunity to visit the picturesque "roof of the world" and to explore unique aspects of nature.

Lakes	Duration in Days	Contribution per Person
Karumbar	12	Rs 35,000
Shandur and Handrap	10	Rs 30,000
Rama and Sheosar	7	Rs 25,000

Reservations will close a week before the departure dates. The dates will be announced soon. Those Interested in taking this excursion, Please contact us.

Ahmad Imran Aslam
Manager
Fundraising & Financial Sustainability Section
Pakistan Wetlands Programme
e-mail: aiaslam@wwf.org.pk
Ph: ++ 92 51 2610880-5
Ext: 110

Isma Sana
Coordinator
Fundraising & Financial Sustainability Section
Pakistan Wetlands Programme
e-mail: frpwp@wwf.org.pk
Ph: ++ 92 51 2610880-5
Ext: 135

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme's site office

Northern Alpine Wetlands Complex
House #1, Street # 1, Afsarabad,
Saidu Sharif,
Swat.
Ph # 0946-729682

Central Indus Wetlands Complex
House # 84, B-2, Omer Block
Abbasia Town,
Rahim Yar Khan.
Ph # 068-5002602

Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex
Bungalow # M-74 Phase -1
New Town Housing Project,
Gwadar.
Ph# 086-4211500.

Salt Range Wetlands Complex
Mohallah Iftakharabad
Dhaka Road , Naushera,
District Khushab.
Ph# 0454-209100.

Pakistan Wetlands Programme

House # 3, Street # 4, Sector F-7/3, Islamabad, Pakistan
Phone: ++ 92 51 2610880-5 Fax: ++ 92 51 2610878